

I claim:

1. An automated method for aiding new product introduction, said method comprising the steps of:
 - 5 obtaining data relating to a proposed new product from a merchant;
 - obtaining, from competitors' websites, data relating to products similar to said proposed new product;
 - processing said data relating to said similar products;
 - identifying product attributes and positioning attributes based on said processed
 - 10 data;
 - conducting online market research based on said identified attributes; and
 - identifying at least one marketing mix for said proposed new product based on a result of said online market research.
- 15 2. The method of claim 1, wherein said at least one marketing mix comprises one or more product characteristics selected from the group of product characteristics consisting of:
 - product configuration;
 - product pricing; and
 - 20 product positioning.
3. The method of claim 1, comprising the further steps of:
 - obtaining input from said merchant in response to said at least one marketing
 - mix; and
 - 25 conducting further online market research based on said input.
4. The method of claim 1, wherein said data relating to said similar products comprises one or more data items for each of said similar products, said data items selected from the group of data items consisting of:
 - 30 a product attribute name-value pair;
 - a positioning attribute name-value pair; and

product pricing.

5. The method of claim 4, wherein said step of processing comprises the sub-steps of:

- 5 filtering a list of said similar products;
 filtering said product and positioning attributes.

6. The method of claim 5, wherein said step of identifying product attributes and positioning attributes comprises a plurality of sub-steps selected from the group of
10 sub-steps consisting of:

 generating a product attribute map by mapping said similar products onto said product attributes;

 generating a positioning attribute map by mapping said similar products onto said positioning attributes;

15 identifying areas on said product attribute map that are uninhabited by said similar products;

 identifying areas on said positioning attribute map that are uninhabited by said similar products;

 applying clustering techniques to said product attribute map to identify clusters
20 of products having similar product attributes; and

 applying clustering techniques to said positioning attribute map to identify clusters of products having similar positioning attributes.

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7. An automated method for identifying a need for reconfiguring, repositioning
25 and/or repricing a product, said method comprising the steps of:

 obtaining data relating to one or more of a merchant's products;

 periodically obtaining data, from competitors' websites, relating to products similar to said merchant's product;

 processing said data relating to said similar products;

30 identifying product attributes and positioning attributes based on said processed data;

detecting a change in said identified product and positioning attributes relating to at least one similar product; and

identifying one or more of said merchant's products that require repositioning
5 and/or repricing based on said detected change.

8. The method of claim 7, comprising the further steps of:
conducting online market research based on said identified attributes; and
identifying at least one marketing mix for one or more of said merchant's
10 products based on a result of said online market research.

9. The method of claim 7, wherein said at least one marketing mix comprises one or more product characteristics selected from the group of product characteristics consisting of:
15 product configuration;
product pricing; and
product positioning.

10. The method of claim 7, comprising the further steps of:
20 obtaining input from said merchant in response to said at least one marketing mix; and
conducting further online market research based on said input.

11. The method of claim 7, wherein said data relating to said similar products
25 comprises one or more data items for each of said similar products, said data items selected from the group of data items consisting of:
a product attribute name-value pair;
a positioning attribute name-value pair; and
product pricing.

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12. The method of claim 11, wherein said step of processing comprises the sub-steps of:

filtering a list of said similar products;

filtering said product and positioning attributes.

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13. The method of claim 12, wherein said step of identifying product attributes and positioning attributes comprises a plurality of sub-steps selected from the group of sub-steps consisting of:

generating a product attribute map by mapping said similar products onto said
10 product attributes;

generating a positioning attribute map by mapping said similar products onto
said positioning attributes;

identifying areas on said product attribute map that are uninhabited by said
similar products;

15 identifying areas on said positioning attribute map that are uninhabited by said
similar products;

applying clustering techniques to said product attribute map to identify clusters
of products having similar product attributes; and

applying clustering techniques to said positioning attribute map to identify
20 clusters of products having similar positioning attributes.

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14. A computer program product comprising a computer readable medium
comprising a computer program recorded therein for aiding new product introduction,
said computer program product comprising:

25 computer program code means for obtaining data relating to said merchant's
product;

computer program code means for obtaining, from competitors' websites, data
relating to products similar to said merchant's product;

computer program code means for processing said data relating to said similar
30 products;

computer program code means for identifying product attributes and positioning attributes based on said processed data;

computer program code means for conducting online market research based on said identified attributes; and

5 computer program code means for identifying at least one marketing mix for said proposed new product based on a result of said online market research.

15 15. The computer program product of claim 14, wherein said at least one marketing mix comprises one or more product characteristics selected from the group of product characteristics consisting of:

product configuration;

product pricing; and

product positioning.

15 16. The computer program product of claim 14, further comprising:

computer program code means for obtaining input from said merchant in response to said at least one marketing mix; and

computer program code means for conducting further online market research based on said input.

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17. The computer program product of claim 14, wherein said data relating to said similar products comprises one or more data items for each of said similar products, said data items selected from the group of data items consisting of:

a product attribute name-value pair;

25 a positioning attribute name-value pair; and

product pricing.

18. The computer program product of claim 17, wherein said computer program code means for processing comprises:

30 computer program code means for filtering a list of said similar products;

computer program code means for filtering said product and positioning attributes.

19. The computer program product of claim 18, wherein said computer program
5 code means for identifying product attributes and positioning attributes comprises a plurality of computer program code means selected from the group consisting of:

computer program code means for generating a product attribute map by mapping said similar products onto said product attributes;

computer program code means for generating a positioning attribute map by
10 mapping said similar products onto said positioning attributes;

computer program code means for identifying areas on said product attribute map that are uninhabited by said similar products;

computer program code means for identifying areas on said positioning attribute map that are uninhabited by said similar products;

15 computer program code means for applying clustering techniques to said product attribute map to identify clusters of products having similar product attributes; and

computer program code means for applying clustering techniques to said positioning attribute map to identify clusters of products having similar positioning
20 attributes.

20. A computer program product comprising a computer readable medium comprising a computer program recorded therein for identifying a need for reconfiguring, repositioning and/or repricing a product, said computer program
25 product comprising:

computer program code means for obtaining data relating to one or more of a merchant's products;

computer program code means for periodically obtaining data, from competitors' websites, relating to products similar to said merchant's product;

30 computer program code means for processing said data relating to said similar products;

computer program code means for identifying product attributes and positioning attributes based on said processed data;

computer program code means for detecting a change in said identified product and positioning attributes relating to a similar product; and

5 computer program code means for identifying one or more of said merchant's products that require repositioning and/or repricing based on said detected change.

21. The computer program product of claim 20, further comprising:

10 computer program code means for conducting online market research based on said identified attributes; and

computer program code means for identifying at least one marketing mix for one or more of said merchant's products based on a result of said online market research.

15 22. The computer program product of claim 20, wherein said at least one marketing mix comprises one or more product characteristics selected from the group of product characteristics consisting of:

product configuration;

product pricing; and

20 product positioning.

23. The computer program product of claim 20, further comprising:

computer program code means for obtaining input from said merchant in response to said at least one marketing mix; and

25 computer program code means for conducting further online market research based on said input.

24. The computer program product of claim 20, wherein said data relating to said similar products comprises one or more data items for each of said similar products,
30 said data items selected from the group of data items consisting of:

a product attribute name-value pair;

a positioning attribute name-value pair; and
product pricing.

25. The computer program product of claim 24, wherein said computer program
5 code means for processing comprises:

computer program code means for filtering a list of said similar products;

computer program code means for filtering said product and positioning
attributes.

10 26. The computer program product of claim 25, wherein said computer program
code means for identifying product attributes and positioning attributes comprises a
plurality of computer program code means selected from the group consisting of:

computer program code means for generating a product attribute map by
mapping said similar products onto said product attributes;

15 computer program code means for generating a positioning attribute map by
mapping said similar products onto said positioning attributes;

computer program code means for identifying areas on said product attribute
map that are uninhabited by said similar products;

20 computer program code means for identifying areas on said positioning attribute
map that are uninhabited by said similar products;

computer program code means for applying clustering techniques to said
product attribute map to identify clusters of products having similar product attributes;
and

25 computer program code means for applying clustering techniques to said
positioning attribute map to identify clusters of products having similar positioning
attributes.

27. A system for aiding new product introduction, comprising: 6

30 a merchant input specification tool for obtaining data relating to a proposed new
product;

a crawler for obtaining data relating to products similar to said proposed new product from competitors' websites, said data comprising product and positioning attributes;

a product filtering subsystem for filtering said similar products;

5 an attribute filtering subsystem for filtering said attributes of said similar products;

a mapping and clustering subsystem for identifying product and positioning attributes common to selected ones of said similar products based on said filtered data;

an online market research subsystem for identifying preferences based on said product and positioning attributes; and

10 an analysis and reporting subsystem for identifying at least one marketing mix for said proposed new product based on a result of said online market research.

28. The system of claim 27, wherein said at least one marketing mix comprises one or more product characteristics selected from the group of product characteristics consisting of:

product configuration;

product pricing; and

product positioning.

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29. The system of claim 27, wherein said data relating to said similar products comprises one or more data items for each of said similar products, said data items selected from the group of data items consisting of:

a product attribute name-value pair;

25 a positioning attribute name-value pair; and

product pricing.

30. The system of claim 29, wherein said mapping and clustering subsystem:

generates a product attribute map by mapping said similar products onto said product attributes;

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generates a positioning attribute map by mapping said similar products onto said positioning attributes;

identifies areas on said product attribute map that are uninhabited by said similar products;

5 identifies areas on said positioning attribute map that are uninhabited by said similar products;

applies clustering techniques to said product attribute map to identify clusters of products with similar product attributes; and

applies clustering techniques to said positioning attribute map to identify
10 clusters of products having similar positioning attributes.

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31. A system for identifying a need for reconfiguring, repositioning and/or repricing a product, comprising:

an input specification tool for obtaining data relating to a merchant's products;

15 a crawler for obtaining data relating to products similar to said merchant's products from competitors' websites, said data comprising product and positioning attributes;

a product filtering subsystem for filtering said similar products;

an attribute filtering subsystem for filtering said attributes of said similar
20 products;

a mapping and clustering subsystem for identifying product and positioning attributes common to selected ones of said similar products based on said filtered data;

an online market research subsystem for identifying preferences based on said product and positioning attributes;

25 an analysis and reporting subsystem for identifying at least one marketing mix for one or more of said merchant's products based on a result of said online market research; and

a scheduler for causing periodic operation of said crawler and said subsystems.

32. The system of claim 31, wherein said at least one marketing mix comprises one or more product characteristics selected from the group of product characteristics consisting of:

- product configuration;
- 5 product pricing; and
- product positioning.

33. The system of claim 31, wherein said data relating to said similar products comprises one or more data items for each of said similar products, said data items
10 selected from the group of data items consisting of:

- a product attribute name-value pair;
- a positioning attribute name-value pair; and
- product pricing.

15 34. The system of claim 33, wherein said mapping and clustering subsystem:
generates a product attribute map by mapping said similar products onto said product attributes;

generates a positioning attribute map by mapping said similar products onto said positioning attributes;

20 identifies areas on said product attribute map that are uninhabited by said similar products;

identifies areas on said positioning attribute map that are uninhabited by said similar products;

25 applies clustering techniques to said product attribute map to identify clusters of products with similar product attributes; and

applies clustering techniques to said positioning attribute map to identify clusters of products having similar positioning attributes.

35. An automated method for aiding new product introduction, said method
30 comprising the steps of:

- obtaining data relating to a proposed new product from a merchant;

obtaining, from competitors' websites, data relating to products similar to said proposed new product;

processing said data relating to said similar products;

identifying product attributes and positioning attributes based on said processed
5 data; and

identifying at least one marketing mix for said proposed new product based on selected ones of said identified attributes.